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SUBJECT: MORE CANADIAN AID TO AFGHANISTAN ANNOUNCED:  
MINEFIELD CLEARANCE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, RECONSTRUCTION,  
AND WOMEN

¶1. (U) Summary: On January 9, International Cooperation Minister Josee Verner announced that Canada will provide C\$8.8 million for demining activities in Kandahar province and across Afghanistan as well as C\$1.9 million to promote community-led development in that province. The Minister made the announcement during a visit to the Canadian Forces Base at Valcartier. She said that Canada's aid to clear land mines and unexplored ordnance will open up more land for agriculture, pasture and housing and its investment in 12 new democratically-elected Community Development Councils will help communities to establish shelter, electricity, roads, drainage and sewers, and improve water and waste management services. A day earlier, Minister Verner said that Canada will provide C\$1.75 million to UNICEF for projects to support maternal health and women's literacy in Kandahar. She also announced a C\$11.5 million Accelerated District Reconstruction Program to speed up reconstruction and development throughout Kandahar province. Comment: The two announcements coincided with Foreign Minister MacKay's early January visit to Afghanistan, including to Canadian forces in Kandahar province, and may be an attempt by the Harper Government to remind Canadians that the GoC has robust reconstruction and poverty-alleviation programs to help stabilize Afghanistan in addition to the efforts by its military. End summary.

¶2. (U) According to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada's contribution will support activities undertaken by the United Nations Mine Action Center for Afghanistan (UNMACA) across the country, including minefield survey and clearance, stockpile destruction, mine risk education, victim assistance and capacity building. C\$3.8 million of the money will support Operation Hamkari (the Dari word for assistance and partnership) in the Kandahar districts of Panjwari and Zherai. Canada hopes that over the next 12 months, about 2.9 million square meters of contaminated land will be cleared, and 27,000 local Afghans, including women and children, will be educated about the dangers of mines and unexploded ordnance. Awareness and advocacy will also be undertaken to ensure opportunities and equal rights for land mine survivors and people with disabilities.

¶3. (U) In a separate initiative, Canada will contribute C\$1.9 million to UN-Habitat's activities in Kandahar City. Working with the Afghan Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, UN-Habitat will establish 12 new democratically-elected Community Development Councils (CDCs). It will work with these and existing CDCs in Kandahar city to help communities implement neighborhood development projects. Some 6,000 households are expected to benefit from this project which seeks to rebuild areas destroyed by the conflict in Kandahar.

The project will also rehabilitate local infrastructure including shelter, electricity, roads, drainage, while also improve services such as water, health and sanitation, and waste management. The infrastructure upgrades will also create local employment.

14. (U) The funding announced on January 8 will support UNICEF efforts to establish a residential obstetric care facility in Kandahar City as well as to expand that agency's literacy program throughout the province. The C\$11.5 million set aside for the Accelerated District Reconstruction Program, over two years, will speed up the construction and rehabilitation of roads, aqueducts, sanitation infrastructure as well as repair schools and clinics through Kandahar province.

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